



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WESTERVILLE WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO VETERANS BENEFITS FRAUD

COLUMBUS – Gabriella Kuppich Stever, age 58, of Westerville pleaded guilty in United States District Court here today to one count of theft of money from the federal government.

Gregory G. Lockhart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, and John Brooks, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General, announced the plea entered today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Terence P. Kemp.

According to a statement of facts that supported her guilty plea, Kuppich made false statements in order to obtain Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Dependency and Indemnity Compensation payments totaling \$240,453.58 that she was not entitled to receive from September, 1985 until October, 2007.

Kuppich aka Stever began receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation payments from the Department of Veterans Affairs following the death on January 16, 1982 of her then-husband Richard Stever, an Air Force Officer who suffered a fatal heart attack while on Active Duty in Spain. These dependency benefits cease upon remarriage.

The VA periodically contacted the defendant to verify her marital status. Stever submitted forms to the Department of Veterans Affairs on multiple occasions on which she falsely stated she had never remarried after the death of the veteran, Richard Stever. In fact, she had married Paul Kuppich, an Army Officer, on September 21, 1985.

The forms submitted to the VA were all signed Gabriella Stever rather than Gabriella Kuppich, the name she otherwise used for DMV and employment purposes. She indicated on all the forms she was not currently married, and on two forms she stated she was a widow and not then married. As a result of these false statements, the VA continued paying dependency benefits, which Defendant Gabriella Kuppich aka Stever was not entitled to receive after her remarriage, for over twenty-two years.

Kuppich faces possible imprisonment for up to 10 years and a fine of \$250,000 upon her guilty plea to theft of government money.

Lockhart also commended the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General on its investigation and Assistant U.S. Attorney Dale E. Williams, Jr., who is prosecuting the case.

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Case Number: 2:07-cr-262